employees with effect from the date they complete three years of service in the newly acquired temporary status.

(b) The number of full time casual labourers in Sultanpur District (Uttar Pradesh) is 43. The number of such casual labourers given temporary Group 'D' status is 43.

(c) part time casual labourers in Sultanpur District have not been given temporary Group 'D' status since the Scheme is not applicable to part time casual labourers. They are being paid wages based on the number of hours of their engagement.

(d) Does not arise in view of reply of (a) and (c) above.

International Optical Fibre Network of VSNL

5371. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the VSNL has signed MoU with a U.S. company to participate in the International Optical Fibre Project;

(b) if so, the cities which will be beneficial in India out of that International Optical Fibre Network; and

(c) the commercial viability of the business plan, the cost implication and the design details of the International Optical Fibre Network?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The benefits of the International Optical Fibre Network will accrue to all the domestic telecom operators who will be connected to it.

(c) The commercial viability of the business plan is being worked out. The cost implications as mentioned in the non-binding MoU entered into by VSNL with M/s CTR group, is US $ 10 million. The international fibre project called "Project Oxygen" is a global optical fibre network comprising of 1,58,000 kms. of optic fiber cable with 101 terminal points in 74 countries. The minimum capacity available on every segment is 320 Gbps and going upto terabits separately on certain segments.

Opening of National Long Distance Services

5372. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the norms prescribed by Government for issuing licences to private

companies for the opening of National Long Distances Services;

(b) whether the same norms are applicable for the foreign companies; and

(c) the present position with regard to issuing licences for opening National Long Distances Services?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) No such norms have been finalised.

(c) Does not arise in view of (a) and (b) above.

Losses incurred by P&T on Postal Stationery

5373. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the P&T Department is incurring a loss of about Rs. 200 crores on postal stationery per year;

(b) the main reasons for such heavy loss, inspite of periodical rise in the prices of postal item; and

(c) what measures Government contemplate to overcome the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The total average cost in respect of some postal stationery items is more than the average revenue during the year 1999-2000 (Projection) to the extent of Rs. 350.76 crores.

(b) The cost of operation of various services of the Department of Posts, which is pre-dominantly labour intensive, is increasing due to revision of pay and allowances from time to time. Since, the Department of Posts is a public utility service Department, affordability factor is to be kept in view while revising postal tariffs for different services to cover the cost of such services. Besides, the Government policy of extending postal facilities in rural and tribal areas involves substantial element of subsidy which add to the over all deficit of the Department of Posts.

(c) The Department of Posts has been making all out efforts to control expenditure and enhance revenue, in order to contain the deficit. Expenditure control is effected through economy measures and closer monitoring of expenditure. Postal tariffs are revised from time to time to reduce the subsidy provided in each service keeping in view the eventual social obligation of the Department. The Department of Posts is also making all out efforts to mobilise